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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (08/03): Palestinians Decry East
Jerusalem Home Evictions; Papers Note US Criticism

Main Stories:

All front pages report on the eviction of two Palestinian families by Israeli authorities. The two families (Hanoun and Al-Ghawi) were forcefully evicted from their homes in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah on August 2. Reports note local and international condemnation of the evictions, including by the Palestinian Authority (PA), UK, United Nations, and US. Al-Ayyam runs a separate front page article noting the State Department's response to the evictions, while Al-Hayat Al-Jadida includes the US criticism as a sub-headline in its lead story. Dmitry Deliani, the Fatah spokesperson in Jerusalem, condemned the eviction as "ethnic cleansing." The Chief Negotiator for the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), Saeb Erekat, stated that Israel is ignoring all international laws and human rights in committing these actions.

All dailies front page news that the Sixth Fatah Party Congress will commence in Bethlehem on August 4. The dailies report that mediation efforts with Hamas to allow Fatah members resident in Gaza to attend the conference have thus far failed. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas reportedly telephoned the head of the Egyptian Intelligence Service (EGIS) Omar Suleiman on August 2 to discuss ways to convince Hamas to facilitate the participation of Fatah members in the conference.

Al-Ayyam front pages a report that the Fatah political program that will be presented during the upcoming Congress will focus on its non-recognition of Israel as a "Jewish state" and its opposition to Israel's continued settlement activities. The program also notes that Fatah perceives a "comprehensive and just peace with the Israelis as a strategic choice."

All dailies run front page news on Israel's reaction to statements made by British diplomat Martin Day to Al-Arabiya TV on July 22 that the British Government is sponsoring urban planning projects in East Jerusalem. The reports note that Israel is seeking "clarifications" from London regarding Day's statements. An Israeli official is quoted saying "we wonder how a democratic country sponsors political activities in another democratic country; we are awaiting answers from British officials."

Al-Quds runs a front page report that according to the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, by the end of 2008 the number of settlers in the West Bank had surpassed half a million, residing in 440 discreet settlements and outposts throughout the West Bank.

All dailies report on the Arab League's denial that it has received messages from the US administration requesting its member states to take initiatives towards normalizing relations with Israel as a means to facilitate US pressure on Israel.

Weekend stories:

Sunday, August 2:

Khaled Mesh'al, the head of the Hamas political bureau, reportedly stated that Turkey and Russia had contacted Hamas to request that Fatah members resident in the Gaza Strip be permitted to participate in the Sixth Party Congress, but noted that these contacts did not "rise to the level of mediation." Mesh'al stressed in statements to

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Main Stories:

the Egyptian newspaper Al Ahram that all mediation between Hamas and Fatah is handled exclusively by Egypt.

Al Quds, Al Ayyam, and Al Hayat report on the speech by Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad at the conference "Jerusalem: History of the Future," at Birzeit University. Fayyad stated that the future of the Palestinian national project and comprehensive peace in the region depend on protecting the status of Jerusalem and its history, and on a solution guaranteeing the rights of Palestinians in the city. Fayyad also announced also that the Palestinian Authority is finalizing a document entitled "Palestine: Ending the Occupation and Establishing the State." According to Fayyad, this document will set forth principles of governance and leadership in support of an independent Palestinian state.

Al Quds, Al Ayyam, and Al Hayat Al Jadida report on Saudi Arabia's refusal to take initiatives to normalize relations with Israel, demanding that Israel first provide evidence of its seriousness regarding the peace process. Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Saud Al-Faisal, in a meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in Washington, focused on the need to address all the core issues such as the Palestinian state and refugees. During the joint press conference the Saudi Foreign Minister stated that "the real question is what Israel is going to give in return for a comprehensive offer," and that so far, Israel has not responded to President Obama's demand to stop settlement activities.

Saturday, August 1:

Al Quds and Al Ayyam report that Ismail Haniyyeh, the Hamas leader in Gaza, threatened to boycott the reconciliation talks scheduled with Fatah on August 25 in Egypt, "if political arrests and threats against Hamas movement leaders and members of the Legislative Council continue in the West Bank." In a Friday sermon at a mosque in the Gaza Strip city of Rafah, Haniyyeh stated that "it is questionable whether the Hamas movement will participate at the next round of talks if the political arrests file is not closed and if threats to the movement's members and PLC representatives are not ended." Haniyyeh also criticized the call for presidential and legislative elections despite the "continuing siege, political arrests, and restrictions of movement on people and goods."

Al Quds, Al Ayyam, and Al Hayat Al Jadida report that a number of senior U.S. Congress members will visit the Middle East next week in an attempt to reassure Israel of US backing. -----

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Iyad Sarraj, Al-Quds, "Obama and the Palestinian Legislative Council members" (08/03): "Obama is smart and courteous and this will assist him in reviving the peace process in the Middle East, if he supports tangible steps to encourage Hamas to finally begin negotiations, including the release of all PLC members from Israeli jails. Otherwise, the good intentions that Obama presented in his June 4 speech will vanish, as many expect, if not followed by actions."

2) Azmi Khawaj, Al-Ayyam, "How long shall Israel remain above the law?" (08/03): "Everyone agrees that respecting international laws is the only mechanism that would allow a solution to regional

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Main Stories:

conflicts. However, since 1948, Israel has been treated as a state above the law - everything is allowed and permitted to her...(Israel) does everything it wants in the world because no country dares to stop her... How can anyone ever reach any settlement with Israel since it is above the law?"

WALLES